



## Cities face crisis as fewer kids enroll and schools shrink



Signs are seen at the entrance of Chalmers Elementary school in Chicago, Wednesday, July 13, 2022.

Associated Press  
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## Minister of Education met with EducationUSA Aruba



## More military policemen sent to the Caribbean



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# Cities face crisis as fewer kids enroll and schools shrink

By **MILA KOUMPILOVA** and **MATT BARNUM** of **Chalkbeat**,

and **COLLIN BINKLEY** of **The Associated Press Chalkbeat** and **Associated Press CHICAGO (AP)** —

On a recent morning inside Chalmers School of Excellence on Chicago's West Side, five preschool and kindergarten students finished up drawings. Four staffers, including a teacher and a tutor, chatted with them about colors and shapes.

The summer program offers the kind of one-on-one support parents love. But behind the scenes, Principal Romian Crockett worries the school is becoming precariously small.

Chalmers lost almost a third of its enrollment during the pandemic, shrinking to 215 students. In Chicago, COVID-19 worsened declines that preceded the virus: Predominantly Black neighborhoods like Chalmers' North Lawndale, long plagued by disinvestment, have seen an exodus of families over the past decade.

The number of small schools like Chalmers is growing in many American cities as public school enrollment declines. More than one in five New York City elementary schools had fewer than 300 students last school year. In Los Angeles, that figure was over one in four. In Chicago it has grown to nearly one in three, and in Boston it's approaching one in two, according to a Chalkbeat/AP analysis.

Most of these schools were not originally designed to be small, and educators worry coming years will bring tighter budgets even as schools are recovering from the pandemic's disruption.

"When you lose kids, you lose resources," said Crockett, the Chalmers principal. "That impacts your ability to serve kids with very high needs."

A state law prohibits Chicago from closing or consolidating schools until 2025. And across the U.S., COVID-19 relief money is helping subsidize shrinking schools. But when the money runs



Students attend a class at Chalmers Elementary school in Chicago, Wednesday, July 13, 2022.

Associated Press

out in a few years, officials will face a difficult choice: Keep the schools open despite the financial strain, or close them, upsetting communities looking for stability for their children.

"My worry is that we will shut down when we have all worked so hard," said Yvonne Wooden, who serves on Chalmers' school council. Her children went to the pre-K through eighth-grade school, and two grandchildren attend now. "That would really hurt our neighborhood."

The pandemic accelerated enrollment declines in many districts as families switched to homeschooling, charter schools and other options. Students moved away or vanished from school rolls for unknown reasons.

Many districts like Chicago give schools money for each student. That means small schools sometimes struggle to pay for fixed costs — the principal, a counselor and building upkeep.

To address that, many allocate extra money to small schools, diverting dollars from larger schools. In Chicago, the district spends an average of \$19,000 annually per student at small high schools, while students at larger ones get \$10,000, according to the Chalkbeat/AP analysis.

"I love small schools, but

small schools are very expensive," Chicago schools chief Pedro Martinez told the school board recently. "We can get some really creative, innovative models, but we need the funding."

At the same time, these schools are often stretched thin. Very small schools offer fewer clubs, sports and arts programs. Some elementary schools group students from different grades in the same classroom, although Martinez has vowed that won't happen next year. Manley Career Academy High School on Chicago's West Side illustrates the paradox. It now serves 65 students, and the cost per student has shot up to \$40,000, even though schools like Manley offer few elective courses, sports and extra-curricular activities.

"We're spending \$40,000 per pupil just to offer the bare minimum," said Hal Woods of the advocacy group Kids First Chicago, which has studied declining enrollment in the district. "It's not really a \$40,000-per-pupil student experience."

Small schools are popular with families, teachers and community members because of their tight-knit, supportive feel. Some argue districts should pour more dollars into these schools, many in predominantly Black and Latino neighborhoods hard hit

by the pandemic. Schools serve as community hubs and points of local pride even as they lose students — as is the case in North Lawndale.

Race also looms large. Nationally, schools with more students of color are more likely to be closed, and those in affected communities often feel unfairly targeted. The prospect of closing schools is particularly fraught in Chicago, where 50 schools were shuttered in 2013, most in predominantly Black neighborhoods. The move frayed trust between residents and the district and, according to University of Chicago research, markedly disrupted learning for low-income students.

In Boston, where the district had been losing students well before the pandemic, families are skeptical of closures.

Among the schools most at risk is P.A. Shaw Elementary School in Boston's Dorchester neighborhood. Revived from a previous closure in 2014, the school had just over 150 students last year, down from 250 in 2018. After making plans to eliminate two classrooms earlier this year — seen by some as a harbinger of closure — the district faced blowback from parents and teachers. Parents rallying behind the school included Brenda Ramsey, whose 7-year-old

daughter, Emersyn Wise, is entering second grade. When Ramsey became homeless and went to stay with family during the pandemic, teachers from Shaw drove half an hour to deliver schoolwork. Later, the school's staff helped Ramsey find permanent housing.

Ramsey, 32, still remembers the joy she felt when she and her two daughters first visited Shaw.

"The principal looked like them — she was a young Black woman who was excited to see them," she said. "They were really big on family engagement, family involvement, and that's just something you don't see that often."

Now, with the school's fate in question, Ramsey is debating whether to keep Emersyn there.

Ramsey's dilemma illustrates what the district calls its "cycle of declining enrollment": Schools' enrollment falls, leading to financial instability — which prompts even more families to leave. The problem is often worse at schools with more students of color.

And when schools face closure, it's "devastating" for families, said Suleika Soto, acting director of the Boston Education Justice Alliance, which advocates for underrepresented students. "It means you have to uproot," she said. "And then if parents don't like it, then they'll remove their children from the public school system, which again adds to the toxic cycle."

Nevertheless, some urban school districts that are losing students, including Denver, Indianapolis, and Kansas City, Missouri, are considering school closures. Earlier this year, the Oakland, California, school board voted to close several small schools despite furious protests.

"School budgets have been cut as a way to keep more schools open," said former Oakland board member Shanthy Gonzales, who resigned in May soon after voting to support school closures. "There are really awful tradeoffs." □





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## Harris to announce \$1B to states for floods, extreme heat

By **MATTHEW DALY**

**Associated Press**

**WASHINGTON (AP)** — Vice President Kamala Harris called climate change an "immediate" and "urgent" crisis Monday as she detailed Biden administration efforts to respond to disasters such as deadly flooding in Kentucky and wildfires ravaging her home state of California.

Harris was set to announce more than \$1 billion in grants available to states to address flooding and extreme heat exacerbated by climate change. The competitive grants will help communities across the nation prepare for and respond to climate-related disasters.

Visiting the National Hurricane Center before the grant announcement, Har-

ris said Monday that disasters such as the Kentucky flood and California wildfires show "how immediate, how current and how urgent the issue is of addressing the extreme weather that we've been experiencing around the country and the world."

In 2021, the United States experienced 20 climate-related disasters that each caused over \$1 billion in damage, Harris said, citing a report by the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration. There were about six such disasters per year in the 1990s. "The frequency has accelerated in a relatively short period of time," Harris said. "The science is clear. Extreme weather will only get worse, and the climate crisis will only accelerate."



Vice President Kamala Harris speaks at the National Hurricane Center, Monday, Aug. 1, 2022, in Miami.

**Associated Press**

The White House is leading a government-wide response to climate disasters that "recognizes the urgency of this moment and

our ability to do something about it," she said. The vice president was at the hurricane center for a briefing before visiting

Florida International University, where she is expected to announce grants to defend against extreme weather events across the country.

President Joe Biden announced last month that the administration will spend \$2.3 billion to help communities cope with soaring temperatures through programs administered by FEMA, the Department of Health and Human Services and other agencies. The move doubles spending on the Building Resilient Infrastructure and Communities, or BRIC, program, which supports states, local communities, tribes and territories on projects to reduce climate-related hazards and prepare for natural disasters such as floods and wildfires. □

## HUD announces \$2.8 billion in grants for homeless services

By **ASHRAF KHALIL**

**WASHINGTON (AP)** — The

Department of Housing and Urban Development is providing \$2.8 billion in fresh funding for homeless services organizations across the country.

The funding, announced Monday, will be allocated via competitive bids through HUD's Continuum of Care Program, the largest source of federal grant support to housing and services programs for people experiencing homelessness.

HUD funds approximately 7,000 homeless services projects annually through the program. Applications for the new round of fund-

ing are due to HUD by Sept. 29.

A HUD statement announcing the funding said that existing Continuum of Care participants can "renew existing projects, apply for new projects and to reallocate resources from lower performing projects to better serve people experiencing homelessness."

The announcement specifies that the new funding will prioritize services for homeless youth and for "survivors of domestic violence, dating violence, sexual assault, and stalking."

Other priorities in the funding include an emphasis on racial equity and anti-discrimination policies for

LGBTQ+ individuals. Access to the Continuum of Care funding will also be expanded to welcome applicants from Native American tribes and internal tribal housing support programs.

HUD Secretary Marcia Fudge said in a statement that the new funding "will help more Americans experiencing homelessness move into homes and access critical supportive services like health care, education, and job training." Fudge added that the Biden administration seeks to "prioritize equity in homelessness efforts and the humane treatment of people experiencing unsheltered



People try to keep cool at the Justa Center, a resource center catering to the older homeless population, as temperatures hit 110-degrees, July 19, 2022, in Phoenix.

**Associated Press**

homelessness, and the funding announced today will help communities do just that." □



# More rain, more bodies in flooded Kentucky mountain towns

By **REBECCA REYNOLDS**

**Associated Press**

**LOUISVILLE, Ky. (AP)** — Another round of rainstorms hit flooded Kentucky mountain communities Monday as more bodies emerged from the sodden landscape, and the governor warned that high winds could bring another threat falling trees and utility poles.

Gov. Andy Beshear said the death toll rose to 35, and hundreds of people remained unaccounted for five days after one of the nation's poorest regions was swamped by nearly a foot of rain. The water poured down hillsides and into valleys and hollows, engulfing entire towns. Mudslides marooned some people on steep slopes. Radar indicated that up to 4 more inches (10.2 centimeters) of rain fell Sunday, and the National Weather Service warned that slow-moving showers and thunderstorms could provoke more flash flooding through Tuesday morning.

"If things weren't hard enough on the people of this region, they're getting rain right now," Beshear said Monday at the Capitol in Frankfort. "Just as concerning is high winds think about how saturated the ground has been it could knock over poles, it could knock over trees. So peo-

ple need to be careful." An approaching heat wave means "it's even going to get tougher when the rain stops," the governor said. "We need to make sure people are ultimately stable by that point." Chris Campbell, president of Letcher Funeral Home in Whitesburg, said he's begun handling burial arrangements for people who died. "These people, we know most of them. We're a small community," he said of the town about 110 miles southeast of Lexington. "It



In this aerial image, the river is still high around the homes in Breathitt County, Ky., on Saturday, July 30, 2022.

affects everybody." His funeral home recently buried a 67-year-old woman who had a heart attack while trying to escape her home as the water rose. Campbell knew her boyfriend well, he said. On Monday, he was meeting with the family of a husband and wife in their 70s, people he also knew personally. He said it's hard to explain the magnitude of the loss. "I don't know how to explain it or what to say, to be completely honest," he said. "I just can't imag-

ine what they're going through. I don't think there really are our words for it." Campbell said his 90-year-old grandmother lost her entire home. She managed to escape to a neighbor's house with some photos. Everything else in the home where she's lived since 1958 is gone, he said. More than 12,000 utility customers remained without power. At least 300 people were staying in shelters. The floods were unleashed last week when 8 to 10 1/2

inches (20 to 27 centimeters) of rain fell in just 48 hours in parts of eastern Kentucky, southern West Virginia and western Virginia. The disaster was the latest in a string of catastrophic deluges that have pounded parts of the U.S. this summer, including St. Louis. Scientists warn that climate change is making such events more common. The floodwaters also swept away some of the region's irreplaceable history. Appalshop, a cultural center known for chronicling Appalachian life, was assessing extensive damage at its repository, where historic documents and artifacts were flushed out of the building. While touring the disaster area Sunday, Beshear said he saw how people have been helping their neighbors. "These are amazing folks. They're hurting, but they're strong. And it's amazing to see them helping each other, even when they've got nothing left," he said. About 400 people have been rescued by helicopter, according to Gen. Daniel Hokanson, chief of the U.S. National Guard Bureau. "In light of the devastation, the response is going pretty well," he said Sunday. □

**Associated Press**

# 17-year-old killed, 4 hurt in stabbings on Wisconsin river



Water Recovery authorities comb the Apple River with metal detectors after five people were stabbed while tubing down the river, Saturday, July 30, 2022, in Somerset, Wis.

**Associated Press**

**SOMERSET, Wis. (AP)** — A Minnesota teenager died and four other people

were seriously hurt after being stabbed while tubing down a Wisconsin river, au-

thorities said. St. Croix County Sheriff Scott Knudson the victims and suspect, a 52-year-old Prior Lake, Minnesota man, were all on the Apple River when the attack happened Saturday afternoon. Knudson said investigators were working to determine what led to the stabbings and whether the victims and suspect knew each other. They were tubing with two different groups that included about 20 people. "We don't know yet who was connected to who, who knew each other or what precipitated it," Knudson said.

The knife attack happened on a difficult-to-access section of the river near the town of Somerset, Wisconsin, which is about 35 miles (56 kilometers) east of Minneapolis. The suspect was arrested about an hour and a half later while getting off the river downstream. "Thank goodness a witness had taken a photo of him," Knudson told the Minneapolis Star Tribune. "Another witness located him at the exit of the tubing area, where he was taken into custody." A 17-year-old boy from Stillwater, Minnesota, died. Two of the other victims were flown to a hospital in

St. Paul, Minnesota, and two others were taken there by ambulance. The sheriff's office said Sunday that the condition of all four surviving victims a woman and three men in their 20s ranged from serious to critical. They suffered stab wounds to their chests and torsos. The sheriff's office didn't name the victims, but did provide a few details about them. The victims included a 20-year-old man and a 22-year-old man from Luck, Wisconsin; a 22-year-old man from Elk River, Minnesota; and a 24-year-old woman from Burnsville, Minnesota. □



# 1st ship carrying Ukrainian grain leaves the port of Odesa

By SUSIE BLANN and SUZAN FRASER

Associated Press

**KYIV, Ukraine (AP)** — The first ship carrying Ukrainian grain set out Monday from the port of Odesa under an internationally brokered deal to unblock the embattled country's agricultural exports and ease the growing global food crisis. The Sierra Leone-flagged cargo ship Razoni sounded its horn as it departed with over 26,000 tons of corn destined for Lebanon.

"The first grain ship since Russian aggression has left port," Ukrainian Minister of Infrastructure Oleksandr Kubrakov declared on Twitter. Russia and Ukraine signed agreements in Istanbul with Turkey and the U.N. on July 22, clearing the way for Ukraine to export 22 million tons of grain and other agricultural products that have been stuck in Black Sea ports because of Russia's invasion of Ukraine more than five months ago. The deals also allow Russia to export grain and fertilizer.

As part of the agreements, safe corridors through the mined waters outside Ukraine's ports were established.

Ukraine and Russia are major global suppliers of wheat, barley, corn and sunflower oil, with the fertile Black Sea region long known as the breadbasket of Europe. The holdup of food shipments because of the war has worsened rising food prices worldwide and threatened hunger and political instability in developing nations.

"Today Ukraine, together with partners, takes another step to prevent world hunger," Kubrakov said. In Moscow, Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov hailed the ship's departure as "very positive," saying it would help test the "efficiency of the mechanisms that were agreed to during the talks in Istanbul."

Under the agreements, ships going in and out of Ukrainian ports will be subject to inspection to make sure that incoming vessels are not carrying weapons and that outgoing ones are



The bulk carrier Razoni starts its way from the port in Odesa, Ukraine, Monday, Aug. 1, 2022.

Associated Press

bearing only grain, fertilizer or related food items, not any other commodities.

The Razoni was scheduled to dock early Wednesday in Istanbul, where teams of Russian, Ukrainian, Turkish and U.N. officials were set to board it for inspection.

More ships are expected to leave from Ukraine's ports through the safe corridors. At Odesa, 16 more vessels, all blocked since Russia's invasion on Feb. 24, were waiting their turn, with others to follow, Ukrainian authorities said.

But some shipping companies are not yet rushing to export food across the Black Sea as they assess the danger of mines and the risk of Russian rockets hitting grain warehouses and ports.

U.N. Secretary-General Antonio Guterres, who proposed the grain deal in April, said the Razoni was "loaded with two commodities in short supply: corn and hope."

"Hope for millions of people around the world who depend on the smooth running of Ukraine's ports to feed their families," he said. Lebanon, the corn's destination, is in the grip of a severe financial crisis. A 2020 explosion at its main port in Beirut shattered its capital city and destroyed grain silos. Lebanon imports mostly wheat from Ukraine

but also buys its corn for making cooking oil and animal feed. Kubrakov said the shipments will also help Ukraine's war-shattered economy.

"Unlocking ports will provide at least \$1 billion in foreign exchange revenue to the economy and an opportunity for the agricultural sector to plan for next

year," he said.

Hearing the ship sound its horn as it left port delighted Olena Vitalievna, an Odesa resident.

"Finally, life begins to move forward and there are some changes in a positive direction," she said. "In general, the port should live its own life because Odesa is a port city. We live

here. We want everything to work for us, everything to bustle." The resumption of the grain shipments came as fighting raged elsewhere in Ukraine, with Russia pressing its offensive in the east while Ukraine tries to retake territory in the Russian-occupied south.

Ukraine's presidential office said at least three civilians were killed and 16 wounded by Russian shelling in the Donetsk region over the past 24 hours. Donetsk Gov. Pavlo Kyrylenko repeated a call for all residents to evacuate, emphasizing the need to remove about 52,000 children still there. Two civilians were killed and two seriously wounded when Russian forces fired missiles at a bus evacuating people from a village in the southern Kherson region, according to Oleksandr Vilkul, head of the military administration in the city of Kryvyi Rih.

Ukrainian authorities have been calling on civilians in that region, which was overrun by Russian troops early in the war, to evacuate ahead of a planned counteroffensive. □

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# Threat of protests, violent escalation stirs fears in Iraq

By **SAMYA KULLAB and QASSIM ABDUL-ZAHRA**

**BAGHDAD (AP)** — Thousands gathered in Baghdad on Monday for a counter-rally called by Iran-backed groups against their rival, an influential cleric whose followers are staging a sit-in inside the Iraqi parliament only to withdraw hours later.

It wasn't immediately clear if the pullback by supporters of the Coordination Framework, an alliance lead by Shiite parties close to Iran, was a definite de-escalation in their power struggle with cleric Muqtada al-Sadr's loyalists.

Al-Sadr's followers have been camped out inside the parliament in Baghdad's heavily fortified Green Zone since thousands stormed the building on Saturday, demanding reforms and denouncing the Iran-backed alliance. Al-Sadr's representatives have called on supporters in Iraqi provinces to protest in their cities and towns in support of the parliament sit-in.

Dueling protests between the two major Shiite factions would have raised the prospect of escalating tensions and plunged Iraq deeper into crisis. The country has struggled with a political vacuum 10 months since



Followers of Shiite cleric Muqtada al-Sadr hold posters with his photo during a sit-in, inside the parliament in Baghdad, Iraq, Monday, Aug. 1, 2022.

Associated Press

federal elections were held last October with no one winning an outright parliament majority and tensions remain high.

Earlier Monday, Iraqi security forces erected concrete barriers ahead of the street protests by the Iran-backed groups.

By early afternoon, thousands of Shiite men arrived at the July 14th Bridge, which leads to the Green Zone, waving Iraqi flags and those belonging to

Iran-backed groups and figures. They wore black, the custom ahead of the holy day of Ashura, an important day of mourning in the Shiite Muslim calendar. Ashoura starts on Sunday.

"We are sending a message to the other side that we are with the law, the state," said one demonstrator, a member of former Prime Minister Nouri al-Maliki's State of Law party. He declined to provide his name, fearing for his safety.

Al-Maliki leads the Coalition Framework.

The alliance had instructed its supporters to say at the bridge and not enter the Green Zone but to "wait for instructions."

Paramilitary forces belonging to the Popular Mobilization Forces, a state-sanctioned umbrella among which Iran-backed groups are the most powerful, formed a ring around the protesters to block off passage to the Green Zone.

Hours later, the protesters suddenly folded up their banners and left the area after one of the alliance leaders, Qais al-Khazali, directed them to leave, announcing that their "excursion" Monday had been for "the sake of Iraq only."

Protesters promptly curled up flags and left the area. They also dismantled the tents erected near the protest site, that at first signaled the possibility of drawn-out demonstrations in a standoff between the two Shiite factions.

On Sunday, al-Sadr had egged on his followers inside the parliament, calling for a "revolution" to change the political system, the constitution and abolish his rivals. He urged Iraqi tribes to join him, a message his rivals saw as a call to a coup.

And though the Coalition Framework swiftly urged for a counter-rally, fractures also appeared within its leadership, with some members calling for restraint and others pushing for escalation.

Among those urging control and moderation was Fatah Alliance chief Hadi al-Ameri, two Shiite political officials told The Associated Press, speaking on condition of anonymity in line with regulations. □



The German charity Sea-Watch 3 with 444 people on board in the central Mediterranean on Sunday, July 24, 2022.

Associated Press

**BRUSSELS (AP)** — The European Union's top court ruled Monday that national maritime authorities cannot impound ships involved in search-and-rescue work on suspicion that they might be overloaded due to the number of migrants they

plucked from the sea. The European Court of Justice ruling came in response to an appeal by German migrant aid group Sea-Watch. Two of the German group's ships were forced to undergo inspections in Sicily in 2020 after

## EU court limits national checks for migrant rescue ships

disembarking migrants for taking aboard more people than they were authorized to carry.

Italian harbor authorities also considered that the ships were not certified for search-and-rescue missions.

But the court said that rescued people "must not be taken into account when verifying whether the rules on safety at sea have been complied with. The number of persons on board, even if greater than that which is authorized, cannot therefore, in itself, constitute a ground for a control."

The Luxembourg-based ECJ also said national port

authorities have the right to inspect ships to assess whether rules on working conditions, health and safety, and the environment are being respected. But it added that they do "not have the power to demand proof that those ships hold certificates other than those issued by the flag state," which in the case of the Sea-Watch vessels was Germany.

Sea-Watch described the court decision as a victory that means that port authorities can't arbitrarily detain ships and prevent them from doing their work. "The ruling provides clear legal security for NGOs and

is a victory for sea rescue. In the future, ships will thus continue to do what they do best: Rescue people instead of being arbitrarily stuck in port," the organization said in a tweet.

Neither the EU nor any of its 27 nations are actively searching for people in danger in the Mediterranean Sea, where more than 1,000 people have died or are missing so far this year, many of whom tried to reach Europe from North Africa in unseaworthy smugglers' boats. But ships are bound by international law to respond to any distress call near them. □



## Minister of Education met with EducationUSA Aruba To discuss points of interest for students going to study in the U.S.

ORANJESTAD – In a pleasant environment, Aruba's minister of Education, Mr. Endy Croes met with representatives of EducationUSA Aruba, Mrs. Jo-Anne Croes and Mrs. Marilis Becker.

During the meeting, they discussed various important points of interest for students who choose to continue their studies in the United States. EducationUSA Aruba provides the necessary information to these students.

EducationUSA Aruba has a list of four thousand accredited colleges and junior colleges, and guides the students who have the wish to study in the United States through the process and all the requirements with which they have to

comply.

It is recommended for the student to begin preparations a year in advance in order to receive guidance and find a good match regarding college or junior college which fits them. EducationUSA Aruba helps the students find a good school in the United States, where the student loan they receive from the government of Aruba, 'Arubalening', is sufficient to cover the cost of the school.

EducationUSA Aruba is also focused on students who have a talent for sport, and helps them not only to get the Arubalening but also to find scholarships depending of the student's talent. A positive aspect of education in the United States is



their sports programs which are much better organized compared to the Netherlands, and this surely is an added value for students

who have a talent in sports. The minister thanked EducationUSA Aruba to open the road to guidance,

preparation, and for creating opportunities for Aruba's youth to study abroad.

## Aruba Lions Club celebrating 75 years of existence

This year, Aruba Lions Club is celebrating 75 years of existence. In connection with this great celebration, president of Aruba Lions Club, Mr. Rubin Ponson explained during a press conference what the plans are for this and gave information on Aruba Lions Club's projects.

Since 1947, Aruba Lions Club is serving the community of Aruba helping those in need. For the celebration of 75 years, Aruba Lions Club is preparing various activities for its members.

Mr. Ponson explained that Aruba Lions Club is known for its social projects, and consists of members who serve the community through these projects, like Hospital Bed

and Wheelchair, Smile Mobile, and Eye Sight, where they check the sight of schoolchildren, among many other projects.

During the pandemic, Ponson explained, it was difficult for the club to continue with these projects. "We had a difficult time when we couldn't carry out the projects. Now we have started preparing again to start. We started scheduling some of the projects like Smile Mobile, Hospital Bed and Wheelchair, which are ongoing projects", he said.

Even so, Ponson highlights, during the difficult times, Aruba Lions Club started other projects like Hunger

Relief, with which they received more than one container of food to feed those who were going through difficulty during the pandemic. He mentioned that they delivered more than a thousand food packages in the community.

Ponson explained that for the celebration of 75 years of Aruba Lions Club, they are announcing a project to collect funds. "This is what allows Aruba Lions Club survive with its projects with which it serves the community. Without these funds, we cannot do anything", he said.

Aruba Lions Club is known for their raffle, where the main prize is a house. But this year, the house



raffle became a car raffle. Ponson explained that they focused in the modern times for this raffle, meaning they focused on electric vehicles.

The raffle will have five prizes: 5 – an electric vehicle for children; 4 – electric step; 3 – electric bike; 2- electric scooter; 1 – electric car, four doors, completely new, 100% electric with a range of 300km on the battery. The proceeds go 100% back to the community. The winners will be chosen on the 2nd of October.

Ponson explained that Aruba Lions Club will have its celebration with some international guests, who will come to celebrate some days and will conclude the celebrations with the car raffle. The raffle will take place during activities at Aruba Lions Club itself with music, food and drinks in order to celebrate.





## Aqua Grill restaurant: The taste of New England with Caribbean flair



**ORANJESTAD** — One thing is for certain: Chef Scott Scheuerman and his team are famous for getting people hooked, just like the fish on your plate. You will get the taste of home fused with Caribbean while dining in elegance. Scheuerman will tell how Aqua Grill established its name since opening in 2002, and why it reaped accolades from such prestigious travel publications as Fodor's, who says, "This hip restaurant is heaven on earth for seafood lovers, who will find fresh fish galore..." Now is your chance to taste Aqua Grill's NEW seasonal menu and create a lifetime culinary memory.

### 'A Scheuer thing'

Secretly, we all know that the success of a restaurant begins in the kitchen. That is where the chef creates his magic and for Aqua Grill the culinary team has won an assortment of awards for their continuous delivery of 'haute-cuisine del mar.' Classic seafood is mingled with contemporary ideas resulting in surprising dishes that soon made the restaurant a must-dine, confirmed by established travel media specialists like Fodor's and Frommer's.

American-born Scheuerman, executive chef of Aqua Grill, is thrilled about 'his restaurant'. "We started out as a New England style seafood restaurant, patterned after Boston style. But we quickly blended into some Caribbean, local flair... if you will. We do still offer the traditional New England dishes like whole Maine lobster, northern seafood plates like the salmon, tuna and swordfish. We buy also from the local fisher-



man to offer Caribbean dishes like snapper and grouper which are number one sellers in our restaurant being the most prevalent local fishes. Catches like wahoo, mahi mahi and brasil are welcome too, anything that comes out of the water we embrace."

### Fresh import from Boston

Aqua Grill flies in their own shipments on a weekly basis mostly from Boston because the price quality balance is the best, says the chef. "We are unique in this. Number one priority is buying fresh, we mean not frozen. Our original concept is New England seafood and we stick to that concept. They have a wonderful assortment of oysters and lobsters as well." Aqua Grill also offers international fusion type of menu items; actually all you wish for is there. A very balanced menu awaits you. "And we have options for meat lovers and vegetarians/vegans too. We, however, do not mix it up too much because we believe we do not want to lose our identity as a seafood restaurant," Scheuerman adds.

### Sublime menu

Now is the time to indulge in Aqua Grill's dinner experience. The established restaurant offers a sensational menu. We present to you a Raw Bar with among others fresh Oysters on the half Shell, Littleneck Clams, Peruvian Ceviche and Lobster Salad. Steamed Dumplings and Prawns or Steamed Mussels seduce you from the open view kitchen.

After that continue your gastronomic trip to heaven with the house specialties like Main Lobster, steamed or broiled or maybe you crave for the best Alaska King Crab Legs you have ever tasted?

You haven't reached your destination yet because there are more main course options to blow you away: Seared Chilean Sea Bass, Cioppino or Blackened Tuba are just some to mention.

Take a pick out of Aqua Grill's delicious desserts to finally conclude yes, this beats it all. We will be back for more.

### About the place

The glow of Aqua Grill is obvious by entering the restaurant. The eclectic of a modern and a traditional New England fish house style appeal and the open-view kitchen adds to the thrill. It's clear as water; for sublime seafood in Aruba go to the island's premier seafood restaurant: Aqua Grill. This seafood-heaven place is already a statement for years with a consistency in upscale dining and top-shelf service. If you like to savor your seafood, this is your dive in. We promise you will get hooked.



**Aqua Grill**  
J.E. Irausquin Blvd. 374  
Phone: +297-586-5900  
Fax: +297-586-5901  
Facebook – Instagram – website



# More military policemen sent to the Caribbean

## Part 1

**Oranjestad - The Caribbean brigade of the Royal Netherlands Marechaussee will have many new colleagues with about 71 joining.**

They will be deployed for the so-called Strengthening Border control Protocol in Aruba, as well as Curaçao and Sint Maarten. A first group of more than 30

Think for example the tackling of human smuggling, human trafficking, drug smuggling and illegal migration."

Each country has drawn up a plan to jointly invest in border control and police service at the airports and surveillance at the maritime border. There is armstrong focus on strengthening the

information position, so that you can make the right choice of deployment of people and material."

The protocol will run for 7 years with the possibility of an extension. The plans of action of the mentioned countries focus on the first 3 years. Therefore, in the coming years a follow up plan will be made for the



years after. The countries will no longer need the help of KMar after those 7 years. Source MagazineDefensie.nl

colleagues have already started this month, creating anticipation for the official reorganization that will lead to the permanent placements starting on July 2023.

As project leader, Major Jan Ploegstra is in charge with ensuring that everything runs smoothly. When talking about the how and why of this extensive plan, he said that it's a "project of great impact."

"The protocol on strengthening the border control in the Caribbean countries of the Kingdom was signed last year by the responsible ministers from the Netherlands and the countries of Aruba, Curaçao and Sint Maarten. The 3 countries have expressed the wish to cooperate in a more intensive manner, including the KMar, Custom Netherlands and the Caribbean Coast Guard in the fight against cross-border crime in order to be better protected.

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## Today Is Going To Be A Good Day

**Here's why: Aruba Today collected some things to do BEYOND the beach. Yes, we know. Aruba, located 15 miles north of Venezuela in the warm waters of the southern Caribbean, is home to beautiful white-sand beaches, 82-degree days, and thus ideal for the perfect beach day. But we are also blessed with some of the warmest people in the world and our island is 19.6 miles long and 6 miles across, with a total area of 70 square miles. Bit more to discover than the white stretch on the coastline we say. Let's mention some of these hidden gems.**



### Nature Calls

The Arikok National park is worth the ride. We love the hikes that are guided by the park's rangers whose job is to maintain trails and protect natural resources. The flora and fauna are beautiful and the historical sites tell you about the island's indigenous roots. The guided tours are even free of charge. If you are not up to walking, you can drive through the park, one way or another this park is a great place to spend an entire day. Cruising through the landscape you end up at some of the most stunning beaches like Dos Playa or Daimara Beach. In Total the park consists of 7907 acres protected nature with a richness of animals living in it. The Aruban whiptail lizard (cododo), Aruban cat eye snake (santanero) and endangered rattle snake (cascabel) are just some of them, you can also admire these close in the park's Visitors' Center. For more information, visit the website [www.arubanationalpark.org](http://www.arubanationalpark.org)



### Philip's Animal Garden

To stay with the animals, let's hop to an amazing place. Something different to do, an experience that is to be enjoyed by people of all ages. Welcome to Philip's Animal Garden. We are not talking about a zoo here, this is actually a sanctuary for all types of creatures, from horses to peacocks, kangaroos to turtles, monkeys, goats, and many, many more different species. The place was founded in 2009 and it is the only

organization rescuing and rehabilitating exotic animals in Aruba, which has resulted in an amazing collection of these animals. They provide a suitable living environment for all the rescued animals. Up until now the owner, Philip, has built this shelter with his own efforts; building all the cages from scratch, designing all structures and welding them with his own bare hands. His goal is to upgrade the facilities to a world-class animal shelter with veterinary care and round-the-clock staffs. With the input from the Aruban community and visitors they provide the best care for these animals. Please check out their website for more information: [www.philipsanimalgarden.com](http://www.philipsanimalgarden.com).



### The Lighthouse

No, you would not think of this as a hidden gem. The California Lighthouse is actually one of the most known highlights in Aruba and many repeated guests most probably took the ride uphill already. But, there is a significant change to this tower. Since September 2016 you can climb the top. In 2015 Stichting Monumentenfonds started the restoration of the California Lighthouse. The project finished in September 2016 and the Lighthouse is now open for visitors to enjoy the beautiful view from the top. The construction of the California Lighthouse started in 1915. The name 'California' came from a vessel of the West India Company and Pacific Steamship Co. called 'California' that shipwrecked in the area in 1891. Therefore they came up with the idea of building a lighthouse that could indicate the island's eastern tip to ships with its light. [www.arubalighthouse.com](http://www.arubalighthouse.com) will give you more information.



### Kayak in the Mangroves

Mangel Halto at Savaneta is definitely a place not to miss out on. The beautiful beach with the natural mangroves is simply a beauty, but if you are into a more active way to enjoy the nature: take a kayak. While you are doing some workout -as it might get a little windy and rough-, you will see the island from a different perspective. You can even make a stop to do some snorkeling at the reef. Its fun, it's healthy and for sure something else. There are several companies that offer kayak tours, we had good experience with The Shack Kayak Tours Aruba, find them on Facebook.



## Aruba's Vermeer is ready to share his collection of decades of photography

Aruba has its own Vermeer, and his work is not any less impressive than the Dutch masters. We are talking about Rob Vermeer, 77, who was born in the Netherlands but his destiny brought him to Aruba, which became his home. This week, the business that Rob Vermeer established, Checkpoint Color is celebrating 50 years of existence with a big exhibition of all their years of photography. But Rob Vermeer's story is more interesting than just the thousands of photos he took during his career.

Rob was born in Zwanenburg, the Netherlands, and has an uncle living in Curaçao. It was after the Second World War, and his father, searching for a better future, decided to move to Curaçao. He left before his wife and young son, to prepare their new life. However, the voyage on a cargo boat was very heavy, and Rob's father became sick with pneumonia and died on the island. Even so, his widow Elisabeth made the decision to go to Curaçao with her son.

A few years later, Elisabeth Vermeer found work as manager of the building that is now the seat of government, the Bestuurskantoor. Back then it was known as Pasangrahan, a word meaning guesthouse. The building was built to house officers and as barracks, and afterwards it became the Bestuurskantoor.

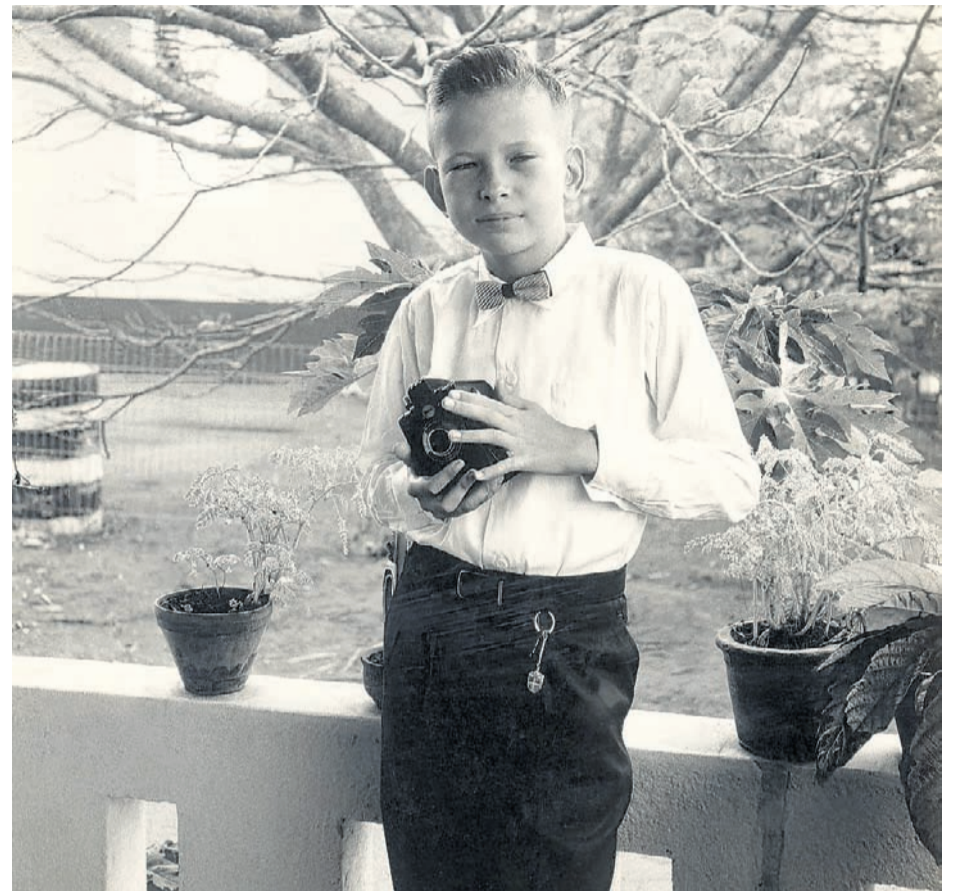
Rob spent his childhood in that building, in the midst of all that activity, where he experienced official visits. When executives from Curaçao visited Aruba, they would stay there. Dutch executives who came to Aruba briefly also stayed there. And perhaps most interestingly, prince Bernhard also stayed there. And a young boy witnessed everything, thanks to his mother's work.

"My mom had to make sure the place was in order. For prince Bernhard's stay, they had to borrow a bed because this was not the place for a royal visit – had to borrow a bed, chairs and other furniture. And the day that prince Bernhard had to leave Aruba, all the furniture was returned to the owners. But the prince's flight was grounded, and the prince had to go back to an empty room. He didn't have anything because even his suitcase was gone. The story is that he had to borrow even a toothbrush."

When the building became Bestuurskantoor, Elisabeth Vermeer went to work at the national library until she retired.

But those experiences helped formed Rob, who found interest in camera and photography during his adolescence. He went to Colegio Arubano and was taking pictures of his friends and family. When he was 15, he started washing and enlarging his own photos. After finishing school, Rob considered becoming a veterinarian, but he didn't like the idea of having to euthanize animals. The other option, to become a pilot, was not possible because Rob wore glasses. So what was left was his hobby, and so he went to the Netherlands to study photography.

There was no doubt that the young photographer would return to Aruba after finishing his studies. Aruba is his home, and his mother still lived on the island. He began working at some of the studios in Aruba, taking pictures of people's weddings, and in his own time he would photograph the nature of the island. During the course of time, he would get requests for commercial photography. Rob was being recognized for his work.



But back then, he still had to send all the negatives abroad to develop if he wanted color photography, so he started thinking of establishing his own business. As a young man he didn't have the necessary capital, so he had to go to the bank, and Rob says that back then Aruba Bank gave him all the necessary cooperation. What also helped was that some of his family members believed in him and helped with the financing for Checkpoint Color. This trust, the culture of supporting each other and allowing a young photographer achieve his business is the other side of Aruba's beautiful history, the Aruba that Rob always loved.

The same spirit of collaboration is still alive these days, because it was artist Natusha Croes, which the family considers a daughter, who convinced Rob to exhibit his photographs taken during his career and the many years of Checkpoint Color.

The exhibition will open on Wednesday, August 3rd, and will celebrate more than just the success of a business of photography development which managed to survive the digital era and the challenges of a Caya Grandi – Main Street – which say most businesses close their doors.

Rob Vermeer followed his instinct to start his photo printing business and together with his wife Marjorie, who worked with him, he expanded Checkpoint Color into a business that became synonym with Aruba also. Which Aruban hasn't been to take his driver's license or passport picture at Checkpoint? Or participated in the glamour shots? And brought their treasure on film to print?

And even though digitalization impacted the photo printing business, the ability to reinvent to keep with the times is something that is in Vermeer's blood.

Today, Fernando, son of Rob and Marjorie is in charge of Checkpoint Color, to make sure that photographs taken by smartphone or digital camera can become a spectacular piece of framed art, or that old photographs of ancestors get a new life.

Rob Vermeer is happy to see a new generation of young photographers who like him know how to combine commercial photography with their own creations.

If there's advice this professional photographer has to give, it's to always remember that the person is central. The background of an image needs to be just that. The photographs of people who last are those who reflect the unique personality of each individual. And that is what, for Rob Vermeer, is the essence of photography.



**CROSSWORD**

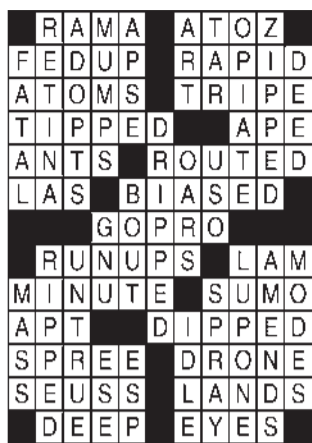
By THOMAS JOSEPH

**ACROSS** 47 Twitch

- 1 Insertion symbol
- 6 Sounds from pounds
- 11 Assumed name
- 12 Customary
- 13 Do a pre-meal chore
- 15 Player's peg
- 16 Sick
- 17 Put in stitches
- 18 Attempts
- 20 Correct
- 23 Safari sighting
- 27 Smell
- 28 Like a desert
- 29 Major-ette's prop
- 31 Soda flavor
- 32 Roll into a ball
- 34 Hoopla
- 37 Stage signal
- 38 Fuming
- 41 Describe a situation
- 44 Cookout spot
- 45 Critical asset
- 46 Feeds the pigs

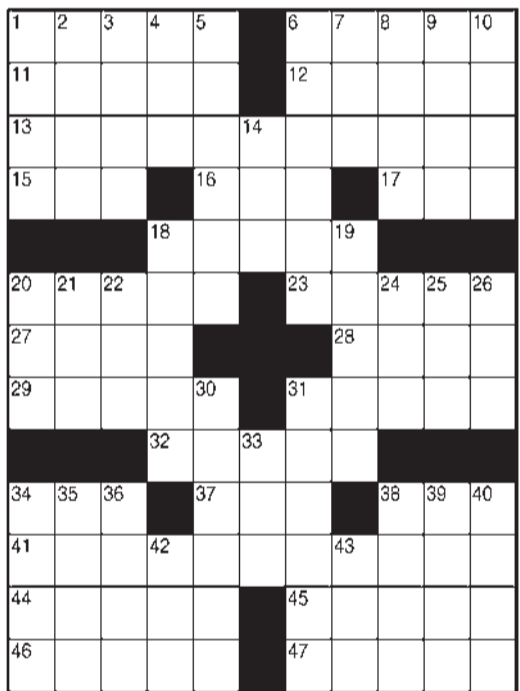
**DOWN**

- 1 Group of actors
- 2 Out of the wind
- 3 Solemn act
- 4 Consume
- 5 Summer top
- 6 Manor worker
- 7 Dry — bone
- 8 Massages
- 9 Leafy vegetable
- 10 Whole lot
- 14 Yale student
- 18 Fling
- 19 Staff symbol
- 20 Hold up
- 21 Lupino of film
- 22 Obtained
- 24 S&L offering
- 25 Tiny taste
- 26 Poem of praise
- 30 Cantina snack
- 31 Party group
- 33 Word on a bill
- 34 Egyptian serpents
- 35 Start a hand
- 36 Director
- 38 Butte's kin
- 39 Picnic pests
- 40 Consider
- 42 Pointer
- 43 Upper limit



**Yesterday's answer**

- 21 Lupino of film
- 22 Obtained
- 24 S&L offering
- 25 Tiny taste
- 26 Poem of praise
- 30 Cantina snack
- 31 Party group
- 33 Word on a bill
- 34 Egyptian serpents
- 35 Start a hand
- 36 Director
- 38 Butte's kin
- 39 Picnic pests
- 40 Consider
- 42 Pointer
- 43 Upper limit



8-2

A XYDLBAAXR  
is LONGFELLOW

One letter stands for another. In this sample, A is used for the three L's, X for the two O's, etc. Single letters, apostrophes, the length and formation of the words are all hints. Each day the code letters are different.

8-2

**CRYPTOQUOTE**

M K D K F J V Q H N N Q S A A

Q H R H F F H X X G T Q U H V Y T M

W H Q G K W T U T N Q K F

Q H R H F F H X. — R T F C Q X T S M

**Yesterday's Cryptoquote:** THIS MORNING, THE SUN ENDURES PAST DAWN. I REALISE THAT IT IS AUGUST: THE SUMMER'S LAST STAND. — SARA BAUME

# Kimberly Palmer: 5 ways to feel richer (even if you're not)



Cash is fanned out from a wallet in North Andover, Mass., June 15, 2018.

Associated Press

By **KIMBERLY PALMER** of NerdWallet

In some ways, feeling "rich" is less about how many zeroes you have in your bank account and more about knowing how to use them to get what you want out of life.

For author and certified financial planner Tom Corley, feeling rich comes from having an Irish pub-style structure in his backyard in New Jersey that allows him to invite friends over for outdoor drinks. For Liz Gendreau, founder of the website Chief Mom Officer, that feeling comes from taking advantage of free, fun activities like visiting local state parks in her home state of Connecticut. And financial counselor Andi Wrenn in Raleigh, North Carolina, finds that feeling when she climbs into her RV and goes for a road trip.

"Richness comes from having small, tangible financial goals that you're working toward," says Megan McCoy, assistant professor of personal financial planning at Kansas State University. Those goals could be paying off student loan debt, buying a house, or something unique, like Corley's backyard structure.

We asked financial experts to share their tips for how to feel richer today, given the current levels of financial uncertainty and stress. Here are their top suggestions:

**REFLECT ON WHAT YOU VALUE**

Gendreau knows that cars aren't important to her but family time is. So instead of

spending money on a new car, she puts her money into family activities. She stretches her budget on those, too, by taking advantage of free museum passes, local libraries and free state parks.

"It's all about finding fun things to do that don't really cost much money but bring a lot of joy and happiness," she says. Indulging in those kinds of adventures gives her that feeling of being rich, even though they aren't costly.

Corley, author of the book "Rich Habits," calls that strategy "value-based spending." He encourages people to think about what's really important to them, such as travel or spending time with friends and family, and to focus on directing money toward those areas, instead of material goods that might not provide as much joy.

**PICK HEALTHY ROLE MODELS**

That joy-focused approach can also help with feelings of financial envy. "If you don't have value-based spending, then you can fall victim to comparing yourself to others and lifestyle creep," which is when spending grows along with income, Corley warns. McCoy says that when we constantly compare ourselves with richer neighbors or influencers on Instagram, it's easy to be dissatisfied. "We need healthy comparisons. Is there someone else you could compare yourself to, such as your past self, or your aunt who

worked so hard and got the retirement of her dreams?" Gendreau suggests hiding posts on social media from people who inspire feelings of jealousy or putting your own spin on them.

"If I see something that looks like a lot of fun at a fancy place that's outside my budget, I might think, 'Can I do something similar at a lower price point? Do I need to go to a fancy beach place or can I go to a closer place?' I don't need to go to the Caribbean to have fun on the beach."

**CULTIVATE RESILIENCE WITH SAVINGS**

"You are going to make mistakes," says Heath Carelock, a financial counselor and coach based out of Prince George's County, Maryland. To move past them, he says, it's important to forgive yourself and to build up a financial cushion. When he was starting out in the working world, he gave himself what he called the "1-2-3-4-5" challenge: He saved \$123.45 out of every paycheck. "Watching your money accumulate is a major way to double down on resilience," he says.

Then, if you face a sudden unexpected expense, you have a financial cushion to protect yourself, which evokes a feeling of "richness" or comfort.

"People are a lot more relaxed if they have emergency savings so they know they can pay off whatever bills they need to every month," Wrenn says. She says that even having one or two months' worth of expenses can provide that elusive feeling of financial well-being.

**CREATE A BUDGET AND PAY OFF DEBT**

"If you don't track where your money is going, you will feel financially insecure because you're worried all the time about, 'Where is my money going?'" Gendreau says. She suggests using a budget to track your spending, especially given current inflation levels. □



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**Editor**  
**Caribbean Speed Printers N.V.**  
**Aruba Bank N.V. Acc. #332668**  
**Caribbean Mercantile Bank N.V.**  
**Acc. #23951903**  
**RBC Royal Bank Acc. #1330772**

**Assistant Director**  
**Xiomara Arends**

**Editors**  
**Pilar Flores**  
**Richard Brooks**

**Sales**  
**Sulaika Croes**

**Classifieds**  
**classified@cspnv.com**

**Distribution and Collection**  
**accounting@bondia.com**

**Social / Website**  
**Juan Luis Pinto**  
**Columnists**  
**Anthony Croes**

**Weststraat 22**  
**T: 582-7800**  
**E: news@arubatoday.com**  
**W: www.arubatoday.com**  
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# Barbara Mandrell returns to the Opry for 50th anniversary

**NASHVILLE, Tenn. (AP) —** Country Music Hall of Famer and Grammy winner Barbara Mandrell retired from music more than two decades ago, but the Grand Ole Opry still feels like home to her.

Mandrell, 73, made a rare public appearance on Saturday night at the Opry to celebrate her 50th anniversary of being an Opry member.

"Here we are at home again," Mandrell told The Associated Press in an interview backstage at the Opry House before the long-running radio and TV program. "50 years. Not everybody gets that blessing."

Born in Texas and raised in California, Mandrell was just 23 when she became a member in July of 1972. But she was already a seasoned entertainer by the time she came to Nashville, after her teenage years were spent playing steel guitar and appearing regularly on the California-based country TV show "Town Hall Party."

Over her decades-long career, the actor, multi-instrumentalist and singer turned millions of fans onto country music in the '70s and '80s, not only through her popular TV show "Barbara



Barbara Mandrell poses in the Grand Ole Opry House July 30, 2022, in Nashville, Tenn. **Associated Press**

Mandrell and the Mandrell Sisters," but also through hits like "Sleeping Single in a Double Bed," "If Loving You is Wrong (I Don't Want to Be Right)" and "I Was Country When Country Wasn't Cool."

She became the first country artist to earn back-to-back entertainer of the year awards from the Country Music Association, crossing over with R&B covers and bringing glamour and showmanship to the genre. Her performances were a

showcase of her musicality, whether she was singing to the top of the rafters, playing pedal steel, the banjo or the saxophone.

"It's called show business. You need to show them something," Mandrell said. "Otherwise, they could sit at home and listen to your recordings or listen to you on the radio. You've got to give them something that entertains them."

With her sisters Louise and Irlene, Mandrell used the power of television to bring

new ears to country music, as well as gospel music. Her musical guests were a mixture of R&B, pop and country artists.

"So many would say things like, 'I never listened to country music, but now, boy, I'm watching every Saturday night and I love it,'" Mandrell said.

This Saturday night, Mandrell was still a champion of country music. Before the show began, Mandrell watched Carrie Underwood from side stage as

Underwood did her sound-check of "I Was Country When Country Wasn't Cool," stopping to give her a hug and greeting Underwood's band members.

Underwood said growing up, Mandrell's voice was always around.

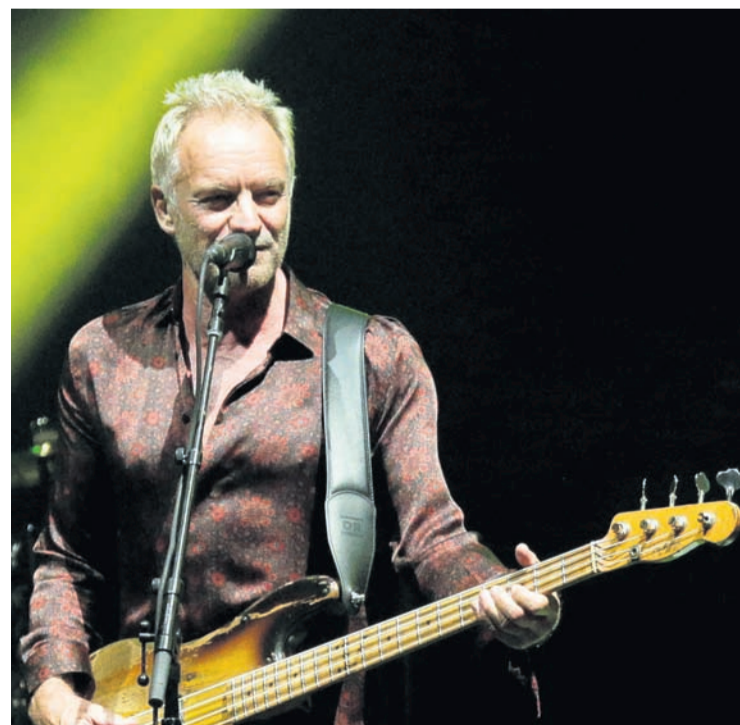
"She has been such an inspiration to me and so many others that stand on the shoulders of great female artists like her," Underwood told the Opry crowd. During the Opry show, Mandrell enthusiastically applauded the all-female artist lineup, including CeCe Winans, Linda Davis and Suzy Bogguss, as they performed her hits.

"I already feel on top of the world.

I feel the deepest of gratitude and excitement because I am such a huge fan of these ladies," said Mandrell.

From her seat in the middle of the crowd, Mandrell waved and blew kisses at her fans, who snapped photos of the country star. Mandrell hasn't played music or sung — other than in church — since she retired in 1997. Her last concert ever was held at the Opry House and made into TV special called, "Barbara Mandrell and the Do-Rites: The Last Dance." □

# Sting warns during Warsaw concert of threats to democracy



Singer Sting performs during a concert with singer Shaggy, as part of their 'The 44/876' tour in Panama City, Oct. 19, 2018. **Associated Press**

**WARSAW, Poland (AP) —** British musician Sting interrupted a concert in Warsaw on Saturday evening to warn his audience that democracy is under attack worldwide and to denounce the war in Ukraine as "an absurdity based upon a lie."

He asked a popular Polish actor, Maciej Stuhr, to come onstage to translate his warning that democracy is "in grave danger of being lost unless we defend it."

"The alternative to democracy is a prison, a prison of the mind. The alternative to democracy is violence, oppression, imprisonment and silence," Sting said and then ran his hand across his neck in a throat-cutting

gesture.

The 70-year-old delivered his message in a country that borders Ukraine, where Russia launched its invasion on Feb. 24 that has killed tens of thousands and displaced millions. Poland has become the place of refuge for more Ukrainians than any other country.

"The war in the Ukraine is an absurdity based upon a lie. If we swallow that lie, the lie will eat us," Sting said. He appeared to be referring to justifications Russia has tried to give for its invasion, including a Russian claim that it seeks to "de-Nazify" Ukraine, a democracy led by a Jewish president.

Those in the audience at Warsaw's National Stadium would have also under-

stand a reference to their own country.

Sting drew strong applause in particular when he said that democracy is something messy and frustrating "but it is still worth fighting for."

Poland's populist government is often accused by the European Union and human rights organizations of eroding democratic norms with its efforts to tighten control over the courts and media, reduce the reproductive rights of women and engage in anti-LGBTQ rhetoric.

After his speech he performed "Fragile," whose lyrics include the words that "nothing comes from violence and nothing ever could." □



# Browns QB Watson suspended 6 games, NFL weighs appeal

By **ROB MAADDI**  
AP Sports Writers

Cleveland Browns quarterback Deshaun Watson was suspended for six games Monday after being accused by two dozen women in Texas of sexual misconduct during massage treatments, in what a disciplinary officer said was behavior "more egregious than any before reviewed by the NFL."

The punishment handed out by the game's disciplinary officer, former federal judge Sue L. Robinson, fell well short of what the NFL had asked for: an open-ended suspension of at least a year for violating the league's personal conduct policy.

Watson, who played for four seasons with Houston before being traded to Cleveland in March, recently settled 23 of 24 lawsuits filed by women alleging sexual harassment and assault during the treatments in 2020 and 2021.

The NFL has three days to appeal the decision.

"Although this is the most significant punishment ever imposed on an NFL player for allegations of nonviolent sexual conduct, Mr. Watson's pattern of conduct is more egregious than any before reviewed by the NFL," Robinson wrote in the conclusion to her 16-page report.

Even though the only discipline in the collective bargaining agreement is a fine or suspension, Robinson mandated as condition of reinstatement that Watson should "limit his massage therapy to Club-directed sessions and Club-approved massage therapists" for the rest of his career.

She added that Watson must have "no adverse involvement with law enforcement and must not commit any additional violations" of the personal conduct policy.

The NFL Players Association has said it would abide by Robinson's ruling. If either side appeals, NFL Commissioner Roger Goodell or someone he designates will make the decision, per



Cleveland Browns quarterback Deshaun Watson stretches during the NFL football team's training camp, Monday, Aug. 1, 2022, in Berea, Ohio.

Associated Press

terms of the CBA. The union then could try to challenge that ruling in federal court. The league had pushed for a suspension of at least a year and the \$5 million fine for the 26-year-old Watson during a three-day hearing before Robinson in June, two people familiar with the discussions told The Associated Press on condition of anonymity because the hearing wasn't public.

The NFL presented a 215-page report based on testimony from four of 12 women interviewed by league investigators, and 37 other third parties. Robinson determined, based on the league's burden of proof, that Watson violated three provisions of the personal conduct policy: sexual assault; conduct posing a genuine danger to the safety and well-being of another person; and conduct that undermines or puts at risk the integrity of the NFL.

Robinson noted the league acknowledged at the hearing that its recommended punishment was "unprecedented" and she concluded the NFL should not change its standards of discipline for nonviolent sexual assault without giving fair notice to players.

"Defining prohibited conduct plays a critical role in the rule of law, enabling people to predict the consequences of their be-

havior," she wrote. "It is inherently unfair to identify conduct as prohibited only after the conduct has been committed, just as it is inherently unjust to change the penalties for such conduct after the fact."

Robinson rejected Watson's denials of wrongdoing and considered his "lack of expressed remorse" to be an aggravating factor.

"As to mitigating factors, he is a first offender and had an excellent reputation in his community prior to these events. He cooperated in the investigation and has paid restitution," she wrote.

Watson, who signed a fully guaranteed \$230 million, five-year contract, will lose only \$345,000 if the suspension is unchanged because his base salary this season is \$1.035 million. His \$45 million signing bonus is not affected by the suspension.

In a statement, the league said it is "reviewing Judge Robinson's imposition of a six-game suspension and will make a determination on next steps."

This was the first case for Robinson, who was jointly appointed by the NFL and the union to handle player misconduct a role previously held by Goodell.

Watson can continue to practice and play in exhibition games before his suspension begins the first week of the regular season.

He can return to practice in Week 4 and would be eligible to play on Oct. 23 when the Browns play at Baltimore.

He waved toward cheering fans while he and his teammates began their stretching period before practice Monday in Berea, Ohio. "We got your back, Watson!" yelled one.

With an appeal still possible, Browns owners Dee and Jimmy Haslam delayed commenting until practice ended.

"We respect Judge Robinson's decision, and at the same time, empathize and understand that there have been many individuals triggered throughout this process," the Haslams said. "We know Deshaun is remorseful that this situation has caused much heartache to many and he will continue the work needed to show who he is on and off the field, and we will continue to support him."

After learning the ruling was imminent, the NFLPA issued a joint statement with Watson on Sunday night, saying they will not appeal and urged the league to follow suit. The union had argued Watson shouldn't be punished at all because he was not convicted of a crime.

Two grand juries in Texas declined to indict Watson on criminal complaints brought by 10 of the wom-

en.

Watson, a three-time Pro Bowl pick with the Texans, has seen his playing career stalled by the allegations. He sat out the 2021 season after demanding a trade before the allegations came out.

In their lawsuits, the women accused Watson of exposing himself, touching them with his penis or kissing them against their will. One woman alleged Watson forced her to perform oral sex.

Watson has denied all wrongdoing, insisting any sexual activity with three of the women was consensual. He publicly insisted his goal was to clear his name before agreeing to confidential financial settlements with 20 of the women June 21.

"This case started because one woman had the fortitude to step forward and make her voice heard," said attorney Tony Buzbee, who represents the women in the civil lawsuits. "Her courage inspired many others with the same experience. None of this saga would have occurred without that one brave voice. One person can make a difference."

Buzbee said that although some of his clients "have strong feelings" about the NFL's proceedings, he noted that the civil process and the NFL's disciplinary process "are very different." On the suspension decision, Buzbee noted that his legal team was not involved in that process.

"We don't know what was presented to Judge Robinson by the NFL's lawyers. We don't know how the NFL's case was presented," he said, adding that "only a small fraction of those women that we represent were ever spoken to by the NFL's lawyers. Beyond that, we can't speculate and have no comment on the decision."

Watson's high-profile case has renewed scrutiny of the league's handling of player misbehavior, along with its support for women, and left the Browns wondering if they'll ever find a franchise quarterback. □



# Trade deadline preview: Juan Soto sweepstakes down to wire

By **JAKE SEINER**  
AP Baseball Writer

When Juan Soto turned down a \$440 million, 15-year deal to stay with the Washington Nationals, it ensured Tuesday's 6 p.m. EDT trade deadline would have a little juice.

That wasn't a certainty when Major League Baseball and the players' union agreed to an expanded postseason format this spring. With 12 October spots available — and no more one-game wild-card rounds — some had concerns about whether there would be enough star power left among sellers to satisfy a potentially growing number of buyers.

A quick glance at the standings shows at least 18 teams with legitimate playoff aspirations — 18 clubs that might benefit from Willson Contreras, Josh Bell or Frankie Montas, among others.

With Soto, there could be even more bidders than that. The 23-year-old is a two-time All-Star, a Home Run Derby champion, a World Series winner and famously one of the most difficult at-bats in baseball. Pry him away from the Nationals, and a club could enjoy 2½ seasons of Soto and his signature batter's box shuffle before he can test free agency.

Of course, with so many suitors, Washington is sure to extract a heavy haul for Soto's services. The Nationals haven't seemed keen on a long-lasting rebuild, prioritizing near-ready talent when trading away Max Scherzer and Trea Turner last year. The industry expects GM Mike Rizzo to eye similarly advanced prospects in Soto talks.

A few contenders seem like better bets to convince Rizzo that now is the time to part with the franchise cor-



Washington Nationals' Juan Soto reacts after fouling a ball during the ninth inning of a baseball game against the St. Louis Cardinals, Sunday, July 31, 2022, in Washington.

Associated Press

nerstone:

— **St. Louis Cardinals:** No franchise has more consistently churned out quality young big leaguers over the past few decades than St. Louis, and the Cards are flush with the sort of players Washington wants. Outfielders Dylan Carlson and Tyler O'Neill, infielders Nolan Gorman and Tommy Edman, and left-hander Matthew Liberatore will surely be asked about. Infield prospects Jordan Walker and Masyn Winn — both at Double-A — would also be enticing. The Cardinals trail Milwaukee in the NL Central but have a good shot at a wild card in the final seasons for Albert Pujols and Yadier Molina.

— **San Diego Padres:** Rookie shortstop C.J. Abrams is a consensus top-10 prospect in all of baseball but expendable because of Fernando Tatis Jr., so that's a start. Young left-hander MacKenzie Gore also

seemed like a prime trade chip after a strong start to the season, but he went on the injured list last week with a sore elbow, clouding his value. Outfield prospects Robert Hassell III and James Wood are consensus top 100 prospects who could also be moved as the Padres chase the Dodgers in the NL West. Speaking of ...

— **Los Angeles Dodgers:** LA reportedly outbid the rival Padres for Scherzer at last year's deadline and have the pieces to do the same for Soto, who was serenaded with "Future Dodger!" chants at Chavez Ravine during All-Star week. The Dodgers top prospect is 20-year-old High-A catcher Diego Cartaya — a bit far away for Washington's historic liking, but a possibility. Triple-A slugger Michael Busch and Double-A pitcher Bobby Miller could certainly work, and the Nats might also be interested in 24-year-old starter Dustin

May, who is recovering from Tommy John surgery.

Among other possibilities: The Texas Rangers have emerged as a surprise bidder in the rumor mill, and Soto would fit nicely into a lineup along with splashy free-agent signings Corey Seager and Marcus Semien. The New York Yankees and crosstown Mets are both in first place. Soto could be insurance beyond 2022 if Aaron Judge leaves in free agency, but New York seems hesitant to move Double-A shortstop Anthony Volpe, ranked among the game's top prospects. The Mets, meanwhile, might have to pay a premium as a division rival. The Seattle Mariners and San Francisco Giants have also been floated as potential landing spots.

Of course, Soto isn't the only star expected to move by Tuesday. Here are some other players to watch:

— **C Willson Contreras, Chicago Cubs:** The three-time All-Star got a standing ovation last week in his likely Wrigley Field finale, with Chicago almost certain to find him a new home before he reaches free agency this fall. The Mets and Astros are among contenders that could use an upgrade

behind the dish.

— **RHP Frankie Montas, Oakland Athletics:** After Cincinnati traded right-hander Luis Castillo to Seattle last week, Montas is likely the top starter available from a pool that also includes Giants LHP Carlos Rodón, Marlins RHP Pablo López, Angels RHP Noah Syndergaard, Red Sox RHP Nathan Eovaldi and Reds RHP Tyler Mahle. Montas is 4-9 despite a 3.18 ERA and isn't eligible for free agency until after the 2023 season.

— **1B Josh Bell, Washington Nationals:** The 2019 All-Star has had a resurgent year, cutting down his strikeout rate considerably while batting .302 with 14 home runs. The 29-year-old free agent-to-be is also considered a positive clubhouse presence. As a switch-hitter, he'd fit into any contender's lineup but might best improve the defending World Series champion Atlanta Braves, who haven't gotten much production at DH from Marcell Ozuna.

— **DH J.D. Martinez, Boston Red Sox:** Boston is only 3 1/2 games out of the last AL wild-card spot, but with three other teams between them and the Rays, Martinez is a five-time All-Star with World Series experience, and he remains an offensive force at age 37. If the Red Sox decide to sell, plenty of teams would be asking on Martinez.

**And a few others of note:** Cubs OF Ian Happ is a free agent after 2023 but could be moved this week after making his first All-Star team. Chicago teammate David Robertson is likely the best relief pitcher available. ... Cincinnati also figures to sell INF-OF Brandon Drury, who hit his career-high 20th homer Sunday. ... Versatile sparkplug Whit Merrifield could be dealt by the Royals, but his status is murky because he has refused to get vaccinated for COVID-19. Merrifield has said he'd reconsider if it meant playing postseason games in Toronto, where travel restrictions have barred unvaccinated players this year. □

